Daily Eagle

A BIT OF DRIFT.

"Brutus Cassis Danks! Are you going after that water, or do you expect the spring to come to you?"

The man thus pointedly addressed slid slowly down from the fence where he was sitting whittling, closed his huge jackknife by pressing its point against the rail, and shambled toward the house.

The woman in the doorway watched his leisurely approach with an expression curiously mingled of indifference and irritation.

A small, stooping figure, with a weak slope to the chin and shoulders; the flaccid face with a fringe of hay-colored beard, and surmounted by a sun-burned hat; the loose, unshapely clothes, which seemed to have adapted themselves to the wearer's habit of mind—was this the pink-cheeked, trim young fellow who courted her fifteen years ago?

"I was a-thinkin', Malviny," he said, taking the pail from her outstretched hand, "that a ketch of fish would taste kinder good. We've had mush pretty stiddy lately."

"It ain't my fault," said the woman, shortly.

"No! I s'pose it ain't," he rejoined slowly, as though the fact occurred to him for the first time.

Just then a little tow-headed girl ran round the corner of the house.

"Where are you goin', daddy?" she called.

"Down to the spring. Want to go, Capitola?" he answered.

She looked lovingly at him with her china-blue eyes, slipped her grimy little hand into his and trudged off beside him.

The woman stood on the door stone looking after them. "They are well mated," she thought bitterly. "One has about as much idea getting a living as the other."

She had not lacked warnings years ago; for Malvina Frost, with her slim, straight figure and snapping black eyes, was the likeliest girl in town, and mothers of marriageable sons had not hesitated to enlarge in her hearing upon the "Danks shiftlessness," re-enforcing their own opinions by sundry old proverbs, such as "What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh," and "Like father, like son." But Malvina only tossed her black curls, and went her own way.

So one June they were married and went to housekeeping in a little house on the bank of the Ohio, and Malvina, in the strength of her youth and love felt able to move mountains, but she found the gravitation of inherited shiftlessness too much for her.

He had done well for a time. The little cottage was neatly fixed up and when, a year after, the first baby came, the young father, with his own hands, fashioned for it a cradle that was the wonder and envy of the neighborhood. But heredity was too strong for him, and though the cradle had six successive occupants, its first coat of paint was never renewed. Mrs. Danks had never heard of Sisyphus. If she had she would have found her task very much like his, with the exception that hers was infinitely harder and more hopeless.

What was it? Mental, or moral, or physical weakness, or all three? Or an evil fate, that whatever he turned his hand to immediately failed? Even his name seemed an unkind fling of fortune. His mother having attended, shortly before his birth, the performance of some strolling actors, was so much impressed that the name of Brutus Cassius was waiting for him when he arrived upon the stage, where he was to play so insignificant a part. It was seldom, however, that he had the benefit of his full name, for the community in which he grew up delighted in abbreviations. But even their rough familiarity hesitated to call a man "Brute" to his face, so he was dubbed "Cash," a perpetual satire upon him who rarely had any cash in his pocket. Against all these odds Mrs. Danks had fought a good fight, but in the struggle her straight back had been bent and the snap had gone from her eyes to her voice.

Somehow the load pressed heavier than ever this morning. It might have been because it was early spring, and the air was full of that indefinable sense of expectancy, that vague hint o rejuvenation that would touch everything except the Danks fortunes. And perhaps it was because the flour barrel was empty; but, whatever the cause, Mr. Danks turned from the doorway thoroughly wretched.

Half an hour later Mr. Danks sauntered in with the water, the child following with a string of two or three fish.

Setting the pail down he said in a deprecating way: "I hev about c'ncluded to take with Badger's offer and go up to Cooperville."

She made no answer, and he continued: "Ef anythin' sh'd happen I could come home."

"O, yes!" she answered, "you could come home easy enough."

The man winced and his sallow face reddened.

"I don't s'pose I'm a master hand a gettin' a livin', but I tell ye, Malviny, fate is agin me. Just as I got a job across the river that felon come on my finger, and when I had a chance on the bridge, out of twenty men I was the only one the derrick hit when it fell. You didn't ought to be castin' it up agin me that I hed to come home; it's fate."

"Call it by what name you like," she answered bitterly, "it's made an old woman of me before my time."

He made no reply, but went out on the doorstone, where the little girl joined him, and presently his wife heard him say:

"Daddy's goin' away. Is Capitola sorry?"

"Real sorry!" said the child, adding, "What'll you bring me, daddy?"

"How sh'd ye like a string of beads?" he asked, after some deliberation.

"Blue beads!" cried the child, then—with the unconscious selfishness of childhood—"will you go right off?"

Apparently he was hurt, for his voice quavered as he asked, "Which would ye rather hev—daddy or the beads?"

"Oh, you!" cried the child, throwing her arms round his neck and pressing her little face to his. So the hurt was healed, and they chattered quietly together till supper time, at which meal there appeared five black-eyed boys, the pattern of their mother. People said the Danks blood had taken a turn in the boys, for they were as keen, tough-limbed, energetic boys as could be found in the county.

The following Monday Mr. Danks started for Cooperville. As he took up his limp carpetbag he said, by way of feeble joke, "Ain't ye sorry to see me goin', Malviny?"

She looked at him a moment, then said, coldly, "You'll be back soon enough!"

He straightened himself and said, with an air of decision quite unlike himself: "You'll not see me again until my work is finished," and so departed, followed only by Capitola, who went to the road with him, and called after him not to forget the beads.

Mrs. Danks from her washtub watched him going slowly up the muddy road, and as she looked her heart relented a trifle toward him—the weak, kind hearted, exasperating little man. Hastily taking her hands from the suds she took a bottle from the kitchen shelf and went to the door.

"Johnny!" she called to the tangle of boys before the door, "your pa's forgot his liniment. Run after him with it, for he'll be sure to get a lame back."

With a parting thrust toward his brothers the boy snatched the bottle and sped away like a young athlete, chin up and elbows back, as he had seen pictures of runners.

When he overtook his father and delivered his message the latter seemed really touched. Though indifferent, apparently, whether his house fell to pieces or not, he was homesick outside his own gate, and now was going away sore hearted at the evident willingness of his family to part with him. The unexpected attention quite overcame him and he looked round for something to return in acknowledgment, but the fields were bare. Suddenly he spied by the roadside some pussy willows with their silvery, fuzzy buds, and cutting off a branch gave it to the boy, saying: "Give that to your ma, and tell her she's the best woman in Meigs county."

"Law!" said Mrs. Danks when the boy burst in with his branch and message; "your pa's getting silly in his old age. I don't want such truck in the house." But after the boy had gone she put it carefully in water and set it on the kitchen shelf, and several times she looked up at it with a look on her face which Mr. Danks would scarcely have recognized.

That gentleman's absence made very little difference with his family, except to Capitola. His wife scolded a little less, and the boys, who looked upon him very much as another boy—only one who liked to sit in the same place too long—pursued their works and sports as usual.

But the Thursday after his leave their outdoor fun was cut short by a persistent rain. How it did pour! Hour after hour, all day and night. Friday morning dawned upon sweeping mists of gray, and an angry, boiling flood that crept inch by inch up its yellow banks, and night closed in on the same picture. Saturday morning the sun shone out bright and clear, but on what a scene of destruction! What had been a river was a rushing sea, which had blotted out field after field, and stopped just at their own gate, and which carried on its heaving surface trees torn up bodily, great timbers, buildings and cattle. Toward night a large barn came floating down, and, lodging just above the house, made a breakwater, round which the waters whirled, bringing into the harbor thus formed all manner of wreckage. The boys watched eagerly, speculating at the amount of firewood thus laid at their door.

"Hi! That's a good one," cried one of them, as just at dusk something like a log appeared around the corner of the barn, balanced a moment, as though undecided, and then swept round into the little harbor. But it was getting too dark to see anything more, so they went laughing and scuffling to bed.

All night long mother and children slept quietly in the little house, lulled by the rush of swift waters. All night long, in the little harbor the log swayed and turned, now swept away from the shore, now drawn toward it, as though reluctant to go.

In the morning, with the whoop and shout, the boys burst from the house, but in a moment were back again with white cheeks and chattering teeth, and, clinging to their mother, could utter but one word—"Father."

Yes! Fate had again been too strong for him. Mr. Danks had come home.

They took up the poor body, bruised and battered, but invested for the first time in the eyes of those who knew it with dignity, and as they bore it across the threshold there fell from the pocket a string of discolored blue beads.

A little later they knew all there was to know of the pitiful story. His fellow workmen had gathered on the wharf Saturday afternoon after work to watch the freshet. One by one they scattered to their homes, up and down the river, and a neighbor, seeing Mr. Danks, called to him to come; but he shook his head, saying he was not going home till his work was finished. So they left him there, looking down the river toward his home. One hour later the wharf was swept away. No one knew what had become of the solitary figure—save One. And as the poor body, without volition of its own, was guided through flood and darkness to its home, who can deny that the spirit—too weak to shape its own course—was borne on infinite pity into the eternal home?—Hester Stuart in Chicago Tribune.

WANTED TO BE REDUCED.

Turning Hopefully to a Tricycle to Get Back Her Figure.

A young man went spinning up Riverside drive on a wheel, swung to the left at the semi-circle, made half a dozen sweeping gyrations, like a buzzard setting on a bough, and alighted astraddle of his backbone—that is, the backbone of the wheel—so near the retaining wall that a little more momentum would have sent him head foremost over it. It all looked graceful enough to indifferent stocks and scions of old families rolling by in their victorias, carts and drags, but the young man's hair had hardly settled back into place when a barouche stopped beside him and a sweet voice said:

"Will you be so good as to tell me, sir, where I can buy a tricycle?"

The young man of the wheel gasped twice when he brought his eyes to bear upon the speaker. Age 35, more or less. Tender-eyed blonde. Crimson cheeks. Dimples. Roll under the chin. Diamonds. Black satin. Yellow gloves. Bracelets. French heels. Coachman. Footman. Skye terrier. Weight say 245 pounds.

Two hundred and forty-five pounds spinning up Riverside on a summer afternoon, mercury 100 degrees!

"I want something to reduce me," continued this fairy. "Don't you think a tricycle would reduce me? Are they hard to ride? I wonder how long it would take me to learn? I see you ride a bicycle. I couldn't do that very well, but I do so much wish to get a tricycle—that is, if it will reduce me. What do you think about it?"

"I—a—really—I—a—think it might reduce one. But, pardon me, madam, I—a—don't think that you—a—need reducing."

This gallant lie brought to the surface three smiles and a roll of the head.

"Oh, I must be reduced. I am resolved upon it. Why, I used to be so slender, willowy, as they call it. I've tried everything to get back my shape, but all in vain, as you see. No more flattery, if you please. It is wasted on an ugly, old, fat woman. But where can I get a tricycle? I ride horseback every day, but it doesn't reduce me one bit."

"No! I should think it would—a—reduce the—a—horse somewhat."

"Oh, it does, it does. He is nothing but a pack of bones," cried the fairy's companion. Age 19. Brunette. Tailor-made suit. V-shaped shirt bosom. Enameled studs. Standing collar. June complexion. Smiled at everything to give her pretty teeth a fair chance. Didn't require reducing.

"I am rather too heavy for poor Bucephalus," chimed in the fairy. "Do tell me about the tricycle."

"Madam, go down to Blank's, in Fifty-eighth street, ask for Jones, hire a pair of wheels for an hour and take a spin up Riverside, just to see how you like the sport."

"Oh, thank you ever so much. I shall do that. Are you riding every afternoon? I think I shall be on my tri—my wheels, as you say, to-morrow. I do hope it will reduce me. It ought to do it. Good afternoon, sir, and thank you so much for your kindness."

The barouche with its fair burden rolled away. The wind came swirling up the road, lifting clouds of dust; other vehicles dashed by the young man of the wheel; a New York Central freight train rattled along the track below; a sprinkling cart spurted and squirted in the semi-circle, but above all the din there sounded one word in a tone hopeful, if pathetic—"reduced."—New York Tribune.

The Influence of Verbatim Reporting.

We may not have the equals of Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Rutledge, Webster, Clay, Calhoun or Prentiss, but as a whole the congressional orator of to-day is far superior to that of the near or distant past. Verbatim reporting has proved a great injury to congressional oratory. In the olden time the senators and representatives would listen to those who were speaking with the attention of assemblages of trained critics.

When verbatim reports of the debates were made and printed, these congressional listeners were no longer to be found.

A senator or representative who had carefully prepared himself would, as he commenced his speech, see his audience engaged in every other way than listening to his accents. Some would be in groups chatting, others would be reading newspapers or books, and the rest inditing epistles or directing public documents to their constituents. It would be difficult for him to say what he had intended, were there not another stimulus by which his tongue and his patience were rendered inexhaustible—the reflection that although his words were falling lifeless upon the ears of his ostensible audience they would be read by attentive constituents at home. It is to them that speeches in congress have been addressed since the introduction of verbatim reporting. Congressmen who were noted for their eloquence upon the home stump have floundered through written platitudes at the Capitol, often prepared for them by some journalist for a stated compensation.—Ben: Perley Poore.

Dealing with Tramps in England.

Not a few citizens of the United States hold the belief that the species "tramp" of the genus "homo" is not only indigenous to this country, but is confined to it. A greater mistake could scarcely be made. The tramp in England is not only quite as ubiquitous as in the United States, but the cause of a constant drain upon public funds which nothing but long habit could make a sorely taxed community acquiesce in. Not to the chance and not over tender mercies of a police station, or the draughty and dog haunted shelter of a farmer's barn, is he compelled to trust when the early autumn frosts begin to render the gate of the field an insufficient protection from cold o' nights. Then the "casual ward" of the poorhouse opens its doors to receive him. Wherever one of these monuments to the much enduring charity of the English nation rears itself, he can claim a comfortable bed of straw and a meal of honest bread in the morning. But tacked to these privileges which makes the lot of the English tramp such a happy one are three conditions, the inevitable enforcement of which disliketh him. He must take a bath, he must discard his natural rags and don a clean night robe, and he must break so much stone or pick such a quantity of oakum before he is free of the street again.—New York Commercial Advertiser.

Labouchere Says of Gladstone.

With regard to the lofty religious spirit with which Mr. Gladstone approaches his tasks, Mr. Labouchere has recently said a good thing. I should preface it by remarking that even when he is wrong, as his enemies say he always is, they allow that before deceiving others he begins by deceiving himself. "He would be a bad man," says Labby, "to play poker with, for when you thought you had him he would produce four aces from up his sleeve. It is not so much having the cards in his sleeve that I would object to, but to the fact that he would swear they were put there by a divine dispensation."—T. P. Gill, M. P.

THE TOWER OF LONDON.

Visit to the Room in Which the Crown Jewels Are Kept—A Risk.

The next most interesting place we visited was the crown room, where the regalias are kept. Each of us paid the woman in charge a sixpence, and after climbing a flight of rickety wooden stairs into the second story of a so-called tower, we were ushered into the famous room where are kept many million dollars' worth of precious stones and gold, which made up the several crowns, scepters and other insignia of royalty on exhibition.

The crown jewels have been kept in the Tower ever since the time of King Henry III, about 650 years ago. They were kept here for safe keeping, for burglar proof safes were unknown in those days. In a great glass case, surrounded by a light network of iron, are the crowns that had been worn by Victoria, by her husband, Prince Albert, and by the Prince of Wales. Beside these are the queen's diadem, a sort of a crown made for the queen of James II, and a St. Edward's crown, so called, which has been worn by some of the predecessors of her majesty, and a queen's consort crown. There are in the case several scepters, made hollow, of gold, about three feet long and an inch in diameter. It was a dazzling show of gold, diamonds, emeralds, ruby, topaz, sapphires, some of which are thousands of years old, and are historically interesting.

How they could trust jewels amounting in value to several millions of dollars in such an apparently weakly guarded room, with no iron doors, is a wonder to me. It seemed that there was nothing to prevent half a dozen American burglars from entering in the guise of tourists, seizing the guide and the woman in charge and choking them into silence, and, after having chloroformed them, break the glass with a stick, hook out the velvet crown, fold it up and put it into their pocket, and then walk out composedly, like honest tourists, and become swallowed up in the vast crowds of London. There have been hundreds of far more audacious robberies than that would be.—London Cor. Cleveland Leader.

A Glimpse of the Country Store.

Did you ever glance through a country or suburban "general store?" When the usual economical man whose taste does not run to the plow, the rather gentle and unambitious gentleman, with the pretty blond wife and a new baby every year, looks around in a quiet spot to see what he can bring into the village for a little capital to sell at a moderate profit, he sees the limits of any special article except whisky, and he goes in for everything. Of course he has school books, some of them rather out of date, but still full of questions and answers and figures and facts. Toys he must have, and here and there you will find the transparent slate, the brilliant top, the puzzle of last century, the old, old figures that we—if you are old enough to be included—were brought up to consider the height of ingenuity, the acme of entertainment. You will find candies in bottles, made on old principles, and healthy to eat if pasty to look at. There may be flies in the bottles, but with ingenious youth they pass for currants, and once in a while the storekeeper comes across a drummer who sells him a lot of old faded fancy paper boxes from dead Christmas times and birthdays of the past, and breaks up the village with the sensation.

Then you'll find slate pencils. They have but little faith in the general comprehension of their customers, these country storekeepers, and so they always tie the pencil to the slate so that there can be no mistake. Stacks of picture books of a pattern the city kid would turn up his contemptuous nose at will be found in kind of boxes or mangers, all bundled up together, and sold apparently by their thickness. Balls of twine, Bohemian glass inkstands of cheap price; note paper with fashions in crests and monograms and things that have passed into limbo; lead pencils that have "job lot" written all over them; motto lozenges, with the mottoes half melted away; all sorts of toys and useful things in thin metal and painted wood, and the open-eyed child wanders through the place as if it were in fairyland.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Paradise of the Philanthropist.

Journalism is the paradise of the philanthropist. From the platform he reaches hundreds, but through the press hundreds of thousands. It is estimated that about twenty-five years are requisite for an idea to "get around" and find its equilibrium in average brains; but the daily newspaper can, if it will, reduce this period to ten years. The propaganda, by this process, goes not at stage coach, but at lightning speed. To fuse public sentiment into sympathy and weld it into organization, we must have the glowing forge of daily journalism.—Frances E. Willard in Chautauquan.

Learned to Paint With Her Toes.

Five years ago Lida Garrison, of Denison, Tex., fell from a tree, and hurt herself so that she has not since been able to use her arm. She has succeeded in learning to paint, holding the brush with the toes of her left foot.

Delightful Edwin Booth.

Edwin Booth has turned over a new leaf and has become a charming and delightful man, whom it is a great pleasure to meet socially.—Boston Home Journal.